Random Reflections of a Grandmother

By

Mrs. R. Chipston Sturgis

O.P. to RRL 4/15/39

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RANDOM REFLECTIONS OF A GRANDMOTHER

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BY

Mrs R·CLIPSTON STURGIS

DECORATIONS BY
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To One
Who, passing to a Higher Life
Took with him
The light from mine
But
Whose Tender Love
and
Steadfast Faith
Make possible a mirth in the twilight

PREFACE

I HAVE been wondering how I could adequately express my thanks for much kindly assistance afforded me in the production of this important addition to literature, and it has just occurred to me that the proper way to do so is in a preface.

First of all, my thanks are due the kind friend who helped me to correct the proofs. His task was onerous; and if I ever flattered myself that I could write English, I laboured under no such delusion by the time the proofreading was finished. I owe him thanks, not only for all his trouble, but for having taught me more in those few hours than I learned in all my school days put together.

Then, I must publicly acknowledge my debt to my husband for the sketches wherewith these pages are decorated. He is a very busy man, and he has behaved beautifully about doing them.

Lastly, I feel that some thanks may possibly be due my daughter for having unwittingly furnished me with the material for several of these Reflections. I have noticed a slight nervousness in her eye as she has watched their production, but I think she will admit that they are not so strictly truthful as to be personal.

As I watch my literary baby start on its travels I am filled with misgiving, but if, in these days of grim and bitter earnest, it has the power to bring a smile or pass an idle moment, it will have served its purpose, and so, with maternal solicitude, I send it on its way.

E. M. S.

SUNNY WATERS
July 1917

REFLECTION I

OCCUPATION? GRANDMOTHER

RANDOM REFLECTIONS OF A GRANDMOTHER

I

I WAS obliged to fill out a card the other day for business purposes, stating my name, age, height, colour, nationality, whether I could read and write, married or single, and various other personal items. Not being of a sensitive or secretive disposition, and having nothing to conceal in my past life, I had not the slightest objection to giving any such information, but upon one question I gazed with some puzzlement — "Occupation?"

I nibbled the end of my pen thoughtfully, and wondered. "Occupation?" Well, what *is* my occupation, anyway? I always did feel that I am a worm upon the face of the earth, and what upon that earth did I do to earn a living? It seems to me that I am busy from the time my early cup of coffee is brought to my bedside at 7.30 A.M. until I fall gratefully into bed as late as I can persuade my eyes to stay open; but what have I to show for it? Nothing.

"Occupation?" Wife? That embraces a good deal, including a husband; but it is n't an occupation exactly; it 's more like a state of being, or the colour of your eyes, or a complexion good or poor as the case may be. Without question it is a vocation to be a wife, but they did n't ask my vocation, only my "occupation"; and in my particular case my husband does n't furnish me with much of the latter article mentioned. I believe I have a husband somewhere, but frequently I don't feel so sure about it. He leaves the house at 8.30 A.M., and returns at 6.45 P.M.—when he is

in town. When he is n't at the farm or in Washington or New York or Philadelphia, he is somewhere else, and it has taken us six weeks, in the exercise of his wonderful and charming gift of reading aloud, to finish a book of two hundred pages. Our circumstances happen to be such that I don't have to darn his stockings or to make his shirts, and he not only packs his own bags, but if I ever go away, he packs mine also, with a perfection to which no professional could ever attain. No: certainly Wife is no answer to that query for *me*.

Housekeeper? Well, my servants have all been with me from fifteen to twenty-five years, and there *are* times when I shrewdly suspect that they rather than I do the housekeeping. We don't say so, of course. The cook comes up to me every morning for orders; but when I order the dinner to be roast chicken, string beans, tomato salad, and apple tart, and it comes up boiled mutton, onions, and tapioca pudding, nobody says anything. It simply means that Hannah knows perfectly well that from

time immemorial that particular day in the week has been dedicated to mutton, and that I had forgotten it; so she takes my orders with a perfectly respectful and unmoved "Yes-m," and then does what she knows I should prefer. How simple! Evidently Housekeeper won't answer.

War Relief? Heaven knows I am busy enough over it. My attenuated bosom swells with pride to bear upon it the medal of an English Association which gives me the Right to work my fingers to the bone, and I've knitted till I fairly knit in my sleep; but, please God, that is only a temporary occupation, and may our hands soon be free of that task!

I had just about reached that stage in my self-examination when the telephone bell rang: —

"Oh, Grannie, is that you? Good-morning. May I go up to spend a few days with you 'cause Mother wants you to take me to the dentist and she said p'r'aps you'd like to have Baby too 'cause Billy Jr. has a cold and she does n't want him to get

it only you'd have to take care of him 'cause she can't spare Nannie and would you please make him another jacket and she'd like you to get him a pair of corduroy trousers."

My brain reels in a dizzy whirl of pronouns, but my doubts are at an end, and my question is answered: "Occupation?" GRANDMOTHER.

Does anyone doubt the seriousness of it as a calling, let her try it. It begins in the beginning, and will end, I suppose, when the breath is out of one's body, and one is tucked away safely in a little copper urn; when whatever there may be left of this world's goods is inherited by one's offspring with a little sigh of relief that at last they have a bit of money which they can spend as they like, not dribbled out to them in the shape of occasional presents with "a string tied to them." It begins when the first baby is expected, and you think you are all in all necessary to the occasion only to find that you are neither wanted nor expected; and then receive a hurry call at

the last minute to say that after all you had better come.

On my first experience of the sort it was a cold November morning, and I was comfortably tucked up in bed, the car and the chauffeur both living some distance away. Fifty-five minutes later I crawled breathless and shivering into my daughter's house twenty-two miles distant. The chauffeur proved his devotion to the family on that occasion, for he not only did not stop to put on his livery, but came without his breakfast. He was distinctly useful, too, for he took charge of the distracted husband for several hours, making him work at the car, and later turned to and helped the cook to finish making the marmalade which had been hurriedly abandoned the night before.

You feel the situation to savour of the humorous when your first grandchild is placed in your arms, and you are not sure whether you are more proud or more resentful at having suddenly become an ancestress. You get used to it later, and

regard it with the calm born of habit. The great regret is that you cannot be a real grandmother any more. The real article used to wear a lovely gray silk dress with a soft white fichu over her shoulders, and a priceless lace cap on her silvery hair, and sat comfortably and with dignity by the fire knitting; always there, always ready to welcome friends and family, and to be the recipient of their joys and sorrows. But what *can* one do? I have not a gray hair in my head, and I am the owner of two perfectly good legs; and though there is nothing my soul longs for more than to curl contentedly in the modern apology for a chimney corner and knit, it would not be decent or moral in these days when the cry for help is shrieking in one's ears. It is probable also that the present-day grandchildren would n't like that kind of a grandmother, anyway. I rather think the kind they really respect is the one who outdances them at balls, and prances off with their particularly best young men. However, we are anticipating.

The chief occupation of a grandmother's first year is to keep her hands off, and it keeps one most frightfully busy. One literally has time for little else, and that time must be chiefly devoted to keeping one's temper — which one don't always. Of course the generation below us think that we don't know anything about bringing up children. That is perfectly normal, and has been the case ever since Eve failed so egregiously with her two sons; but it never fails to be exasperating, and I anticipate with much pleasure sitting on a little pink cloud in the hereafter, and watching my granddaughter upsetting all *her* mother's most cherished convictions. To think one improves on the previous generation is, as I say, quite natural, though not invariably true; but what is not natural is the utter lack of heart and tenderness of the present-day young mothers. They show this lack in their attitude toward their parents, and far more markedly toward their children.

They wish to bring their children up well and not spoil them. So far so good; but I

boldly say that they have not the welfare of the child so much at heart as the desire to save themselves trouble by having well-behaved children who will "amuse themselves." They, very properly, wish discipline; but their one idea of discipline is to make a baby cry, and then leave it for an indefinite time to shriek itself into a most undisciplined rage. If one mildly suggests that, let alone the brutality, their method does not seem to meet with unqualified success, the reply is: "Oh, yes, — *you* would pick him up every time he whimpered"; and the obvious fact that to let a child alone to do exactly what his own ill-temper demands is not discipline is lost upon these one-idea-ed young people. It is a literal fact that I have yet to see the young mother who has any control over her children who are under three years old. But this is not a dissertation on the bringing-up of children (that will be my life-work later!); what I have said is only introduced to illustrate one of the difficulties of learning the occupation of being a grandmother.

There are various plums to be gathered, though, along the stony route of learning, the first really ripe one being when baby No. 2 is imminent and baby No. 1 is sent to Grannie till the affair is over. That is an occupation all right, but with few drawbacks. To be sure, one wishes one's conscience were a little less sensitive, and that one did n't feel bound to carry out certain rules and regulations demanded; but the older generation are a heap more clever and capable than the younger, and can carry out these regulations with a minimum of injury to the child. This is a happy time; and after days and nights of unremitting care, a well-trained, well-behaved, happy baby is restored to the parental roof-tree — and at the end of a fortnight all one's careful work is undone! Next time one has two babies to take care of. That is less of an occupation and more of hard labour; so that at the end of five or six weeks Grannie's feelings resemble nothing so much as those of an exhausted kangaroo. It certainly occupies one's hands quite sufficiently to

protect them from any wiles of Satan. Plums? Yes, lots of them. When the babies come to you for the petting and cuddling forbidden by the modern régime, but the prerogative of a grandmother; when you can stop their crying from naughtiness or fatigue, or heal a poor little bumped nose by a plaster of kisses. And if you do have to give up time, money, and your afternoon nap on their behalf, it's what Grannies are here *for*.

As Grandmother one has a distinct feeling of superiority over one's friends who have not attained to that honour. It is quite different from the feeling one has at the production of one's own first child. That hitherto unheard-of wonder has been accomplished through one's own efforts; but the case of a first grandchild is more like the conferring of a decoration or order (Order of the Bath, perhaps), and one is inclined to sit ostentatiously on a twig and preen one's feathers. It's funny — just plain funny — to see your own baby with a baby of *her* own. Your thoughts are busy

— not with plans and dreams and visions for the future of the grand-baby as they were for that of your own, but with wonder and speculation as to how your child will meet the problems that lie before her in the bringing-up of her children. You won't approve of the way she does it, you know. You will wish to guide and help her, and steer her safely past the places where you bruised your own shins, since you know now how easily they could have been avoided; but you can't — and to leave her free to tumble down over her own mistakes keeps you so busy that you have no time to think of anything else.

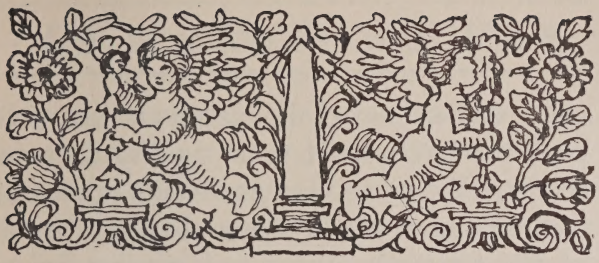
It also must not be forgotten that, in addition to the real article, one must occasionally be a deputy-grandmother. There is pretty sure to come along a temporarily grass-widowed and homeless niece or young cousin or something with a child or a baby. As Grannie has rooms all ready fitted with cribs and nursery necessities, it would be pure inhumanity not to take in these stray waifs. So one does, and enjoys it immensely.

They are much better behaved than one's own offspring, and can be scolded, and advised and bully-ragged generally, with a freedom and success impossible in a nearer relationship. Then your "occupation" suddenly doubles up on you, for the age of one of the real grandchildren is sure to match that of the deputy-grandchild, and "it would be so nice for the children to know each other and play together." So the child who matches is sent gleefully to "pay Grannie a visit," all alone. Of course there is no room for the nurse, so Grannie drops War Relief, Charities, Christmasing, everything, with a dull thud, and devotes day and night to the happy small person.

The picture does not resemble that of the Grandmother of fifty years ago. It lacks charm and is hopelessly devoid of peace; but it leaves one in no doubt as to one's mission in life — "OCCUPATION?" GRANDMOTHER.

REFLECTION II

HOSPITALITY



II

SOME forty-odd years ago I was the owner of some very charming cousins in New York. Their home was the headquarters for all the family far and near, genealogically or geographically, and I remember so well my dear mother saying to me, apropos of a visit to them just before my marriage: "My dear, entertain as much as your husband wishes, but unless he acquires very much more money than he has at present, *never* keep 'open house.'" Faith, she was right. I'd be a far richer woman to-day if I had followed her advice, — and incalculably poorer in fun, enjoyment, and pleasant memories.

I gave a luncheon party to six people the

other day at a cost of exactly twenty-five cents; — but wait, I must qualify that assertion. We had a very good soup made out of the Sunday baked beans. I bought those of the grocer at the usual modest price. Then we had an extremely good *rechauffé* dish made out of the leavings of several dinners, and I plumed myself on the economy of it till I began to reflect. The various fowl of which it was constructed had come from the farm, and we had eaten hen in one form or another till we had fled cackling from the table; but when I really brought my mind to bear upon it I realized that those birds cost my husband an average of $17.38 apiece, the eggs about $48.50 a dozen, the lettuce (which was a trifle wilted) $5 a head, and the dessert — I forget what it was, but it also had its foundation in the farm — was of equal value. I was going to say that my sole expense was the twenty-five cents for a box of broken mushrooms with which I adorned the fowl; but I think I prefer to leave this bit of reflection, and return to the path from which I strayed.

The moral I had in mind was that one could give three formal, good-sized, real dinner-parties at less cost than to keep open house for one week. It is not only that many people may drop in, but it is almost as expensive if they don't. If they come, they do eat up the food and you have to get more; but if they don't, they don't; and one person cannot possibly eat up a quantity that was originally gauged for five or six. Also (have you never noticed?) it never keeps. If you enquire for it two days later, it has always "gone bad," or "had to be used for the kitchen supper." If by any chance you tempt fate by gambling on no one's dropping in to dinner on a given day, it never fails to bring an extra number of particularly hungry men to ask for "a bite," and you are so mortified that you buy double quantities for a week following. One night I threw caution to the winds, and served one small, baby chicken, the sole survivor of a recent flock; there were three of us in the family, and two huge men "dropped in" to dinner. And I had

not another thing in the house. My husband is a beautiful carver, having been taught by his father-in-law, who belonged to the old school, and believed carving to be part of the education of a gentleman, and that chicken was made to masquerade as a turkey. The two men behaved with a politeness beautiful to behold, but I made a note of the fact that the next time they came they sent a message beforehand to ask if it would be "quite convenient." My husband prides himself on being able to feed six people on one chicken, but my favourite nephew says it is getting beyond a joke.

In the old days, of course, it was our own friends who dropped in, then were added the friends of our children, and now begin to come those of our grandchildren, and I cannot possibly say which constitute the greatest source of pleasure and amusement. I do know, though, that I may be thankful that the price of meat was not thirty years ago what it is to-day. One friend, the nearest and dearest, and perhaps the most frequent

of all guests, used to have five helpings of roast beef, and eat only the best little round bit out of the middle of the slice. My husband finally took to giving him thinner and thinner slices, and though I never had the courage to order her to do so, I always fondly hoped that the cook made hash out of the untouched material he left on his plate. He was a source of expense in other ways as well, for he had a habit of tipping back so vigorously in our best English mahogany dining-room chairs that one after another they broke with a crash, and we were obliged to have them backed with iron supports which are on them still — pretty much all that is left of the old hospitality. To-day our infrequent meetings with the friends of our youth are attended by grandparental courtesy and mutual consideration, and formal invitations are the order.

This habit of our friend and the consequent necessary strengthening of the chairs rendered these particular pieces of furniture impervious to the onslaughts of the next

generation. Our children's friends devoted their energies to the big round arms of the library sofa. *Why* they prefer to perch on the arms, instead of sitting comfortably on the seat, is n't quite clear to my mind, but it is an immense satisfaction to my vindictive soul to see that pretty nearly every time those arms come off they roll somebody on to the floor along with them.

It is really a great joy to keep open house, and to know that all these young things feel that they are truly welcome, and have a home here. Sometimes I wonder whose home it is, anyway.

I came in one day to find my niece sitting in the drawing-room with a young man's arm around her. "Dear children," I whispered to myself," how sweet it is to see love's young dream"; and I retired hastily to the library, where I found one of my nephews with a girl in his lap. I murmured my apologies, and fled hastily to the dining-room to find my daughter entwined in the arms of a man who was no relation at all, so I had to lock myself into the bath-

room as being the sole spot where I did not feel myself to be intrusive in my own house.

The only place where I really dread the claims of hospitality is at my husband's country place. There, either his most Bohemian friends are apt to turn up in the free-and-easy fashion of summer life, and, in spite of long training, my Early-Victorian feelings are scandalized by seeing a six-foot man go swimming attired in the baby's borrowed bathing trunks; or else my husband cheerfully bids the most wealthy and conventional of his clients to stay with him in a house where you have to share one bathroom with the entire family, and if you are n't quick about it the babies bang on the door and threaten to come in.

I have a very dear cousin who is the epitome of pink propriety and all she ought to be; the kind you put on your very best clothes for, and whose household is so beautifully ordered that a pin out of place would jar like a false note. One extremely hot afternoon I was having a heated discussion with my youngest grandchild with

regard to sleep, and his arguments were little short of deafening. The piazza was strewn with débris, I had on my most disreputable clothes, and the beads of perspiration stood upon my brow. A soft rustle at my side made itself felt rather than heard, and there was my dear cousin, daintily and perfectly attired, and as calm and cool in appearance as she is in character. She had motored over from her own country place, bringing with her two of our most charming and most primly particular New York cousins. I was true to the family traditions of hospitality, and urged them warmly to stay to tea; but they glanced about them a little anxiously, and said they were sorry they must go. They went. And as they drove out of the avenue, they met the mother of my grandchildren, arrayed in a skirt up to her knees and an indescribably dirty blouse, no hat, and driving in a very small, tumble-down buggy, drawn by a wall-eyed, knock-kneed horse, and in close, not to say affectionate, company with a very fat, very dirty, and extremely dis-

reputable gypsy-man. I have not seen the New York cousins since, but the home cousin has preserved her usual discreet and tactful silence.

I sometimes wonder if in old times, or in the days of the proverbial Southern hospitality, the hostess took a great deal of trouble and pains to have always a well-filled table, and to see that everything was attended to with a great nicety and perfection. I find that nowadays I am no longer mortified by a shortage caused by unexpected guests, or if the best bed and table linen happens to be in the wash.

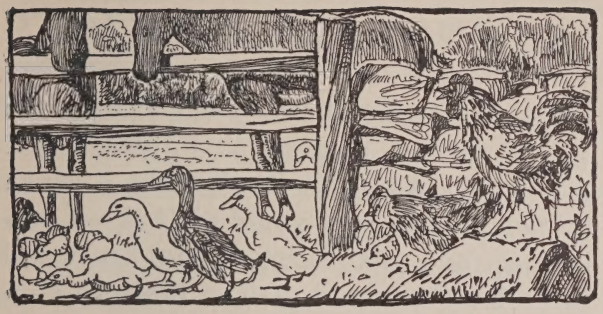
One night our own children were away and their two bedrooms vacant. I had gone to bed, and was peacefully reading as a preliminary to resting my tired brain. I slept with my bedroom door open in those days, — I don't any more, — and the children's most intimate friends and cousins were furnished with latch-keys. I was immersed in my story, and heard nothing till a head peered around the door, and a voice enquired politely: "Oh, Auntie, may I sleep

here to-night?" "Yes, indeed," I replied hospitably; "the back room is empty, go in there." I returned to my book, but within ten minutes I heard a step on the stair, and the apologetic voice of my son-in-law-to-be spoke discreetly from the hall. "I am so sorry, but I missed my train; could I sleep here?" "Oh, certainly," I answered, "you will find the front room vacant." I was just dropping off to sleep when a third head insinuated itself around the corner of the doorway and another: "Oh, Auntie, may I sleep here to-night?" floated to my tired ears. "Yes," I replied patiently; "there is still the library sofa, but if any more of you come there is nothing but the dinner table."

Now, my dearly loved mother-in-law would have got up and made all those beds afresh with clean sheets.

REFLECTION III

WANTED—A SOUL



III

A FRIEND of mine who is a physician states his belief that women have no souls. He breeds (or is it hatches?) hens, and his deductions are drawn therefrom. How appropriate!

I don't know whether it is the hen-headedness of women or the eternal feminine of hens that has led him to his conclusions, but I frequently find myself wishing that I were his wife — temporarily, of course; too much of it would pall upon me. Think what a truly happy life you might lead a husband who believed you soul-less. Of course, if you have n't a soul, you don't

have to think about saving it, and that frees you of such a responsibility; also, if you don't have a soul, it would seem a logical sequence that you would n't have a conscience, and that is where the fun would come in. One could make a husband's life such that he could not quickly enough drop his study of hens in general in order to devote himself unreservedly to the study of creating a soul for his own hen in particular; and I'm inclined to think he would find it a heap more interesting if he would only give his mind to it.

I'm perfectly willing to admit that a woman's conscience is a unique sort of institution, and not to be compared in kind with that of a man; it has all the charm and unexpectedness of the truly feminine woman, and one never knows exactly what line it will take. For instance, I will not smuggle at the Custom House when I come home from abroad because — well, really, do you know, I don't know exactly *why* I won't. I am inclined to think it may be because it is the kind of thing that a woman is expected

to do, and I have a sort of pride in taking the man's point of view about it. I am perfectly sure that I do not refrain out of any respect for the Government. I am filled with unholy joy when anyone will outwit the absurdity of a protective tariff (so long as it is not I who do it), but I don't believe it is in the least because I am honestly honest about it. Similarly, if I had the vote, I should simply glory in pairing with some twenty-five or thirty of the opposing party, and I am absolutely certain that my candidate would be the man who told me that my grandchildren were miracles of wit and beauty, and strongly resembled their grandmother. To my mind the argument would be so clear and simple; naturally a man of such penetration and sound judgment would infallibly make a good politician. Now, it would never occur to a man to pair with more than one of the opposition, — he probably would n't be quick enough to think of it — and he would be quite unmoved by any tribute to his descendants; but he need n't therefore be perky about

his conscience. He would be just as likely to strain it as a woman, only not in just the same way.

My friend told me of his conclusions several years ago, and perhaps it may have rankled a bit, for I have thought of it from time to time ever since. It came into my mind the other day, not long before Christmas, when I was trying to do some shopping for my husband and my son-in-law and my father-in-law and my nephew and my grandson and a few other men, and I reflected that if I had n't a soul and ergo a conscience, they would — supposing they were really in possession of those articles — be doing it for me instead of I for them. But however great a soul a man may have, it does n't take the particular form of doing for others. That seems to be up to women. A friend of mine, who has been mildly amused by, though perfectly in sympathy with, the late furor for Preparedness, said to me one day that on the whole she thought it a good move. "To be sure," she said, "we have a standing army of one hundred

thousand men, and we are calling out five hundred thousand women to take care of them. I have always noticed that it took several women to look after one man, and I don't know that a ratio of five to one is any too much."

I don't believe it is, and what is more, I don't think the reason is only because a man can successfully keep several women busy looking after him, and doing his errands, and clearing up his messes, but because men have never really got beyond the polygamous stage of evolution. Generations of monogamy have given them a conventional veneer of the higher standard, but the old instinct is what is really at the bottom of a man's sending his wife on one errand and his daughter on another and the maid to do a third; to talk Platonics to one lady friend and Love (with a capital) with another; and in these days of extreme frankness it's a mercy if it is n't obstetrics with an unmarried woman as an extra! Let a man loose to-day, and in a month he would have a full-fledged harem — of so

called "Platonic" wives, anyway, if not the real article.

What I am pleased to call my mind has a hen-like habit of squawking from one subject to another, and as I shopped, I pondered over a question which was perhaps less relative to my train of thought than suggested by it. I have not the recipe for the making of a soul, and what the ingredients may be that, according to my doctor friend, are furnished by the male and lacking in the female make-up he did not tell me; but if the recipe calls for service, renunciation, some charm, a good deal of tact, and a whole lot of patience, I really do not think I unduly flatter the sex when I say that these qualities seem to me, on the whole, at least more obvious in women than in men. It is in the nature of things, and is usually a fact, that a woman's life is made up largely of service, and this is especially so of a married woman — that is, if she is the kind she ought to be. Her work is not always useful or in the right direction; but she thinks it is, and much of her time is

filled with it. It is very seldom one finds a woman whose attitude is that of an acquaintance of mine, who, after a very protracted business meeting of a Charity Board, said to me about a year ago — the end of 1916, mind you, when in addition to all local work, War Relief was in full swing: "It *was* a long meeting, but I am always so thankful for anything that fills up my time." Fills up her time! I gazed at her speechless, and from that day to this I have found no adequate comment to make.

We are not nearly so generous as men with regard to money, but we do give unstintingly of our time and strength, and often of our very selves. I am not proposing to enumerate all the many ways: what they are, how we do them, nor even to cackle too loudly over the fact that we do do them; all that has been generously granted us long since. We know, and men know, and we know they know, that in our little circumscribed way we do our limited best to —

"Measure our life by loss and not by gain;
Not by the wine drunk, but by the wine poured forth."

And we do pour forth of our service. We relinquish dreams and visions; we give of gifts material and spiritual, often when the gift is met with unconcern; and we do a great deal of unselfish clucking and scratching that nobody asks of us or wants us to do — and it is small thanks we get for that same. No one expresses much gratitude, and the funny part of it is that we don't want it. As a matter of fact, if gratitude is expressed, one rather resents it, and is extremely apt to hop, with the inconsequence inseparable from every charming woman, to feeling hurt that they — "they" being usually one's immediate family — should think that we wanted to be thanked.

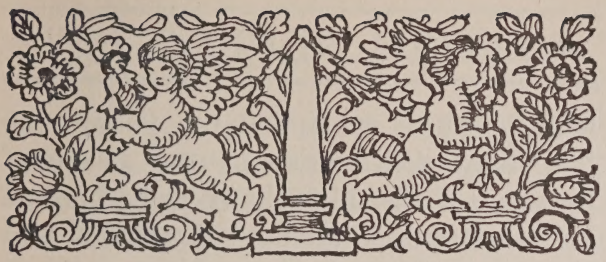
But the real problem in my mind is how to meet the real or imaginary lack of appreciation. Would it be well to regard it seriously and bear it bravely, with Christian patience and fortitude? Would it be better to pray for their souls (even though we

have n't any ourselves), and ask that they may see more clearly their sins of omission? Would it be best of all to shed tears in private, and, recalling all our own faults and failings, strive for a still higher standard? Or just say the feminine equivalent for *Damn*, and let it go at that?

I wonder.

REFLECTION IV

MALE *vs.* FEMALE



IV

WHEN my last grandchild arrived, it proved to be a boy, and that child will never know what he escaped by his judicious selection of sex. After the first three or four grandchildren have given assurance that the family is in no danger of coming to an untimely end, one welcomes the new arrivals appearing, in steady procession, with a calm born of habit; so when the telephone at my bedside aroused me from slumber at 2 A.M. to convey the news of the most recent little assurance, I murmured with what enthusiasm I could muster; "Really? How very nice": and turned over and went to sleep again. But when I awoke to full consciousness in the morning, I drew a

long breath of relief that the young man had shown a discretion unusual in one of his sex. I really think that if he had been a girl his parents would have thrown her into the waste-paper basket. Now, why, I wonder? They already had a very nicely balanced arrangement of sex in their young family, and why should they have cared so deeply on which side the scales should weigh? I should quite understand and sympathize in not wanting a family composed exclusively of either sex, but if I already had several of a kind, I think I should be impartial as to the exact species of blessing to be added to the rest.

I have been told by my men friends, with a frequency becoming slightly painful, that there is a most unnecessary superfluity of women in the world already, but I doubt if these particular parents were influenced in their preference by any altruistic desire to remedy this evil. Of course it is delicate flattery on the part of the wife to wish as many replicas as possible of her husband, but when his heart is also set on a plurality

of boys, one might suspect that he had n't found his wife altogether satisfactory.

I have a sneaking preference for men myself, but I do think that women are of use in the world, too, and perhaps the superfluous woman most of all, for her time is not so wasted in attempting to pander to the vagaries of any one man in particular.

When one reflects upon all the momentous affairs men have to deal with in a business life, one quite realizes that they cannot accomplish everything unaided, and while it is their place, of course, to originate and launch all the great enterprises of life, I have a feeling that several matters of importance might be left dangling at loose ends if a few women were not here to attend to them. Take, for instance, that matter of my *Transcript* of the previous night having twice been found carelessly thrown into the ash-barrel instead of having been carefully placed in a receptacle provided for the purpose. I am almost sure that no man would have taken the trouble to draw my attention to the mistake by a

series of seven personal letters. It is by these little persevering ways and attention to detail that women accomplish so much that men are unable to perfect.

Men are not by any means invariably selfish or proud, and there are several kinds of work which they will turn over to women with the frankest possible admission of their own inferiority. I know a Board of Directors of which the active members are exclusively men, with the exception of the Secretary, and if there is any disagreeable or delicate letter to be written, or complaint to be made, it is invariably unanimously voted that "the matter be left to the discretion of the Secretary." This is undoubted proof of the most sincere flattery, and the Secretary is never allowed to feel herself other than of value.

I have noticed that when a campaign requires real quickness of perception and originality of method in its procedure, there is very apt to be a preponderance of women on its Board of Directors, and this is especially true of organizations for Reform.

This may be because men have not the same burning desire for this object that women have, or possibly because they fear contagion, but, as a matter for reflection, this feminine majority is not without significance. In matters connected with health, it is, of course, natural for them to take the lead, for that is particularly their province, and men are usually the first to admit that in this direction women have more enthusiasm. We all know how difficult it is to regulate the health of one's own family; to persuade a man to take a pill requires a concentration of thought and energy unequalled by any pursuit of wealth — unless they happen to have a pain, when they become edifyingly meek; and if difficult in private life, naturally the education of the Public is a campaign requiring great delicacy of touch, and a mind fertile in expedients and understanding. There are innumerable Societies, Organizations, Clubs, and Associations, not only for the care of those already stricken with disease, but for instruction as to the best ways of avoiding

illness, and better still, for impressing upon the public in general the truly important knowledge that "Prevention is better than Cure." Many plans for inculcating this axiom were tried here, but without success until a clever woman, herself of Boston birth and belonging to a family of high literary attainments, became convinced that a Public so instinctively cultured as that of Boston could not possibly be expected to be influenced by uncultured methods which made no appeal to the mind. Owing to the well-merited confidence of her Committee, the plan of campaign was placed unreservedly in her hands, with a result by which the most fastidious Public could not fail to be moved. Would it be possible to be either so careless or so unrefined as to transgress after reading in the subway or at Herrick's ticket agency, or any other equally unimpeachable spot, the touching words? —

"The cough and sneeze
Both spread disease;
And so does spit, —
Take care of it."

Could any poet appeal more simply or directly to heart and brain? I have long felt that this poem should be immortalized, and gladly take this opportunity of paying my tribute to genius.

Poetry and ash-barrels are humble avocations, perhaps, but seem appropriate to women, and one may be kept really quite busy filling up gaps left by the masculine inattention to trifles. One occasionally feels that there is a splendid vagueness, not to say lack of finish, about a man's attitude toward detail which encourages women in their comforting conviction that man was not meant to live alone, and that in all humility they may yet feel themselves to be counted a part of the great scheme of the universe. It was a committee of able and prominent men who built a superb and up-to-date modern hospital, with most elaborate precautions in regard to the infectious wards; but it was a woman who pointed out meekly that as the hospital regulations required all nurses from all wards to dine in the same room without the oppor-

tunity of changing their uniforms, it was difficult to preserve the asepsis unbroken. It was a man's club which not long since welcomed and made much of a supposedly British officer, who made himself so agreeable and interesting that the resources of the club were placed at his disposal; but it was a woman whose suspicions as to his identity were aroused, and who saved a minority of its members from the results of the guileless faith that the club eventually regretted.

And so, as I recall the satisfaction with which the sex of my latest grandchild was greeted, I am wondering if, in the dim and dark future, his parents will ever regret that the scales did not tip the other way.

REFLECTION V

COUNTRY

V

I HAVE hesitated a long time before trying to express myself upon a subject which has been sung by so much worthier pens than mine, notably Mr. Dooley's and Mr. Browning's; but if I do not free my mind of the burden of my feelings, I fear mine might be the fate that would have overwhelmed Mr. W. R. Thayer if he had not taken the precaution of writing "Germany Versus Civilization." Failing that outlet, I feel sure he would have burst; and what fun he must have had in the writing of it.

The most charming and witty woman in Boston once remarked to a friend: "Going to the country, are you? Well, just kick

a tree for me, will you?" — upon which remark was promptly formed the "Kickatree Club," of which I am an unknown and humble, but most enthusiastic member.

All my friends know that I hate the country, and they regard me rather askance, as if I were not respectable, or were the victim of some unclean aberration; and every year when spring comes round, my family begin to watch me rather nervously, and to whisper among themselves their wonder as to 'just what Mother will do this summer.' Also I catch my husband gazing at me with pained and silent reproach, as much as to say, "How is it possible that any wife of mine can be so besotted?"

For a great many years I have either tried to do violence to certain feelings of mine, or to conceal them, and, following Shakespeare's slightly immoral advice, to "assume" that I have the virtue of admiring and enjoying certain things that among people of taste and culture are universally accepted as necessary to the salvation of one's artistic soul; but now that I have

reached Grandmotherhood and old age, I feel a sense of glorious, free honesty stealing over me, and I no longer think it worth while to make the effort.

There are various things in this world that I do not like, and the country heads the list. Attendance at Grand Opera is pretty bad, but that does n't last so long, and if one shuts one's eyes, and avoids watching a man in his death agonies carolling sweetly his last words, or seeing Tetrazzini (for instance), who weighs at least two hundred and fifty pounds, dying of a wasting decline, one can enjoy the music. Besides, you are in a comfortable seat, — especially if some of your rich friends have invited you to their box, — and you can, not only get points and pleasure out of seeing your friends' best gowns, but are comfortably conscious of looking rather well in your own. But the country lasts so long. In the old days one went to the country for the month of August, or if one was very fashionable, for July as well, and when you went, you regarded it as a holiday, and stayed there. Now-

adays people love the country so dearly, and are so anxious to get there, that they express themselves as unable to wait till the middle of April or the first of May, as the case may be, before moving to their country estates;—and then they spend their entire time coming back to town every day. You can't get a table for luncheon at any of the clubs because they are so full of women who love the country. Some of them even stay in the country all winter, and I really think they ought to have extra spikes in their halos, for there is n't a day that every one of them is n't in town busied over some good work.

I have an awful suspicion that it is really quite horrid of me to hate the country as I do; it is so ungrateful to my family who try so hard to make it pleasant for me. My husband has a place of some forty or fifty acres by the sea. You can't see the sea. You can only hear it in the distance when there is going to be a three days' northeast storm, which occurs about once a week, or be reminded of its nearness by being lulled

to sleep by the cheery moan of the fog-horn that lives about a mile away.

We have a tiny white cottage something over two hundred years old, and most charmingly pretty and picturesque,— on the outside, — covered with vines and creepers, sheltered by a noble oak tree, and smothered in wonderful lilacs. Inside, you have to keep your clothes in trunk trays under the bed, and shout downstairs for hot water whenever you happen to want to wash.

It stands within fifty feet or so of a creek which seemingly has the pecularity of continual low tide, but if by chance it forgets itself long enough to be high tide during the daytime, there is a constant procession of half (or less) clad men, women, and children passing from house to pier, for the landscape must not be marred by a bathhouse. There would n't be room for one anyway, unless it straddled right across the creek; so everybody undresses in his own room. The men-folk all bathe before breakfast as well, and though the little pier is in full view of

every window in the house, not one of them would dream of going in with so much as a rag on him, let alone a bathing-suit. My servants are all inured to this by long habit, but one summer I happened to have an "accommodator" parlour-maid, and she was n't hardened to the family idiosyncrasies. There were five men in the house that morning, and being — as usual —low tide, they had elected to paddle out in the boat — thirty feet, perhaps — to the middle of the creek. There they stood as the Lord had made them, balancing this way and that in the boat, the early morning sunshine glistening on their bodies, and throwing them into glorious relief against the dark foliage of the oaks across the creek. I was standing at the head of an infinitesimal flight of stairs, and the parlour-maid, arrested in the pursuit of her morning duties, stood below, her eyes popping out the front door. "My *lord!*" I heard her exclaim, with an agitated whisk of her duster, — "I never see-ed such a sight in *my* life!"

The piazza is the biggest part of the house; a space some twenty by thirty feet in size, with plenty of rugs, chairs, and tables, and a comfortable great sofa-hammock that bangs your shins, or takes you unexpectedly in the legs from behind and makes you sit down with undignified haste. One end looks out on the quaint little terraced gardens and the creek running busily out to sea, and the other on the swill-pail and wash-tubs, and the men and maids going and coming on the kitchen porch. It is the only place on the fifty acres where one *can* sit, for it is hermetically sealed with wire netting to save us from the mosquitoes. If I ever have about my head in the hereafter half such clouds of glory as I have had of mosquitoes in that place, I shan't need any halo nor any spikes in it either.

There is one quite nice bedroom upstairs. It has four windows against which the great lilac trees — they are far beyond bushes — bump their noses, and it opens directly into the little (and only) bathroom. For a great many years we did n't

have any bathroom at all, and then one year my husband put it in as a wedding anniversary present to me. I do love a practical man.

Naturally, the family, being there continuously, take possession of the least uncomfortable rooms, so the three spare rooms are over the kitchen, and if anybody happens to be in the outer one, the only means of egress from the two others is to fall down a steep flight of stairs on to the kitchen stove; but the cook and the company are quite habituated to this, and the latter always politely insist that it is one of the charms of the house.

I do try so hard to enter into the spirit of the place when I am down there. I have tried to weed the garden, to pick the vegetables, and to feed the hens, but I am so old and stiff that I make a poor hand at it, and, besides, I'm so busy slapping mosquitoes that I don't accomplish anything. My aunt and I once made a valiant effort to be rural by viewing the sunset from the romantic situation of a haycock. We sat there

for some time, removing the straws as they tickled our necks, and assuring each other how comfortable we really were, and how delicious was the fragrance of the newly mown hay. Later, at the family meal, when we retailed with pardonable pride this evidence of our innate desire to appreciate country life, and described exactly the haycock we had selected, there was a moment's silence, broken by the clear voice of my (then) small daughter: "That was n't a haycock; it was the manure pile."

Somehow I had thought it a little damp, but the mistake was discouraging, and I have never quite recovered from the shock.

The house is as small as any building that ever called itself even a cottage, and when it contains a husband, two or three nephews, a daughter, a son-in-law, and several grandchildren, it gives the impression of a Revere Beach trolley car on a holiday. My servants have to sleep in four box stalls, built originally for colts, at some little distance from the house, and it's so

handy if I happen to want one of them unexpectedly. My bedroom is built out over the piazza, and as floors and walls all over the house are of the lightest possible description, not a sound is lost. My daughter and my particular pet nephew have a habit of sitting out on the piazza late at night conversing in the hammock, which goes *squeak-squawk* with a maddening irregularity. They keep it up till, unable to bear it another minute, I seize my little flashlight and, making my way through the darkened house, break in upon their confidences with a savage, "Children, *will* you go to bed!"

My husband is a lover of early rising. There was a time when he used to come jauntily into my room all agog for cheery conversation about 5 A.M. He does n't do it any more; he said he found me unresponsive. My daughter shares his tastes, and it is no unusual event for her to appear in my room in riding-breeches and boots at 4.30 or 5 A.M., with her riding-crop under one arm and the latest baby under the

other, and, plumping the latter down on my bed, request that I look after it till she gets back.

I returned to my summer residence one day last year after several weeks' absence to be met half a mile or so from the house by two babies, two collie dogs, two go-carts, one nurse, one daughter, one horse, and a husband. With heart-warming shouts of welcome, these were *all* piled into the car. I'm not quite clear about the horse, but to the best of my remembrance he was included, and we rolled merrily on. By the time we reached our destination, my only parasol had been smashed, my husband had sat on my best hat, one of the collies had tried to eat up my back hair, and the chauffeur was having nervous prostration because the baby kept getting mixed up with the steering-wheel. We found a casual sort of afternoon tea scattered over the piazza, with a few unattached nephews and nieces enjoying it, to which were shortly added a few guests who dropped in for a quiet chat. The evening was somewhat

hectic, owing to my daughter going off alone in the canoe to visit the gypsies, and being gone so long that one nephew went off to find her, followed by my husband to find him. By a sorely mistaken error in judgment my daughter had allowed one of the grandchildren to sleep in the same room with her father. Now, my husband adores children and they adore him, but he is n't exactly what one could call a disciplinarian, and on that particular night that grandchild elected to talk cheerily to Grandpa from 11.30 P.M. to 3.10 A.M., when I went in and made remarks. I had just returned to bed, and was falling into my first sweet sleep when one of the collies, who was spending the night in the best lily bed beneath my window, suddenly remembered from whence he had sprung, and howled in piercing falsetto till I got out of bed and settled him, and before I had got fairly back again there came up one of those early morning thunderstorms through which one cannot possibly sleep, and by the time that was over, it was time to get up and dress, that the men-folk

might take the accustomed 7 A.M train to town.

And yet my family can't think *why* I don't love the country.

REFLECTION VI

PREPAREDNESS

VI

IT has come to my surprised notice that there are a number of people living somewhere in or about Boston who have not received one or another of the various forms of appeal for Preparedness that are going about, and I am wondering where their residences are situated. Not that I wish to know in order to avoid these regions, (possibly the reverse), but it seems strange that there should be habitations so remote as to have escaped the house-to-house applications which might be regarded, perhaps, as the forerunner of conscription — of which I highly approve.

The unfortunate citizens who have been overlooked in this matter have been de-

prived of a great opportunity for the acquisition of self-knowledge. The appeals which have been so generously circulated contain for the most part searching examinations into one's occupations, abilities, moral character, and financial liabilities, with regard to none of which can one give a clear and lucid statement without deep, self-instructive thought. To have a card containing a list of perhaps a dozen occupations placed before one, requiring an affidavit as to how many or which of these one feels one's self capable of undertaking, opens up possible vistas of talents, the existence of which might never have been suspected had it not been for this necessity of self-examination.

I have been in favour of Preparedness ever since 1914; but, like many a better woman, I had not realized that the matter applied to myself until only the other day, when I was suddenly awakened to a sense of my personal responsibilities.

One day an acquaintance was shown up to my library as I sat in peaceful loneliness

over my cup of afternoon tea, and, advancing toward me with one of these cards in one hand and a pistol pointed at my head in the other, demanded that I put down in black and white exactly what I was prepared to do for my country in event of war. At least, that was the impression I received. She was too busy visiting every other house in the block to wait for my reply to her demand, but she left the card with me to be filled out and returned for filing.

As it was sunset, I thoughtfully folded up my flag, which had been run out with alacrity to celebrate the one and only move on the part of our Chief Executive which had hitherto met with my approval, and sat myself down again with a depressing sense of responsibility. Really, this tabulating of one's self and one's efficiencies is getting to be a dreadful mental strain. I have hardly recovered from the pangs necessitated by the labour of filling out the card that gave birth to these Reflections. Anyway, one of the questions is already fitted with

an answer: "Occupation?" That's easy: Grandmother. So far, so good, but that is only the first of this very long list.

I am filled to overflowing with respectful admiration for all these workers and their orderly minds and their splendid energy. I suppose a lot of energy is bound to go to waste in every great undertaking, but I believe scientists tell us that nothing produced is ever lost. I wish I knew enough science to make a guess as to where that superfluous energy is going to accumulate before it bursts. I am distinctly of a timid disposition, and I wonder if it would not be advisable to be forewarned, so that when the time comes one might "stand from under." In fact, there are so many questions of a nature hitherto undebatable to be answered nowadays that I feel like nothing but a huge interrogation point of helpless indecision.

I had not been advanced to the rank of Grandmother at the time of our Civil War, so I cannot speak with authority, but I sometimes wonder if, with all our prepared-

ness, we are doing so very much better than the women of that day. I have been told by my elders and betters that some of them were just as much of a bother and nuisance as are some women to-day, so I fancy that, equally, there were just as many who were really useful. I don't believe that a single one of them ever attempted to repair engines or volunteered for dentistry. I don't know about the latter, however; lots of us have pulled out our children's first teeth, and perhaps that would qualify us. I am sure they were quite as capable of dentistry as of some of the openings for usefulness offered to-day.

I am honestly and deeply humbled by the contemplation of what many of my sex can do — according to the list given on my little card. Against the positions which I feel capable of filling I am to mark an X — just as if I were voting. Now, under the head of "Agriculture" comes "Farming." Could I? Well—no. My husband is a heap cleverer than I, but if I should spend half as much money on a state farm as he does

on his own private one, there would be no funds left for munitions.

Then, "Poultry Raising." That's all right and eminently feminine, but I do so hate a hen — either a literal or a metaphorical one. They are so leggy and squawky, and have such unpleasant diseases. Besides, I have such a sisterly feeling for them. There are so many times in my life when I understand from experience exactly the mental attitude of a hen when she decides to cross the road one way in front of a motor and then goes the other. I never in the world could make up my mind to chop off a head so similar to my own.

When it comes to "Telegraphy," "Wireless," "Motor-car repairing," etc., I feel that I am, indeed, left behind in the race for capability. The woman who can do such things must have a very active mind. Of course that might be taken in two ways. A most agreeable gentleman was visiting me the other day, and said he thought *my* mind was active, and then my husband spoiled it all by growling from be-

hind his newspaper: "So is a flea." He is quite vulgar at times. But machinery always seems to me so essentially masculine that I regard with awe the female mind that can grasp its intricacies. And then its dirt is so dirty. I don't mind getting my fingers dabbled in blood and antiseptics while binding up wounds, but there is a sort of abandoned vulgarity in the black greasiness of machinery that seems more appropriate to — I mean does not seem fitted for a woman.

Apropos of wounds, I wonder if I ought to join a "First-Aid" class. I wish to help all I can, but I don't care to endanger the lives of my fellow-countrymen any more than is necessary, and I have an awful suspicion that "first aid" is a greater menace to life than is even modern warfare.

A friend of my daughter came in to call the other day looking pale and worn, with her arm in a sling, and when I solicitously enquired what had happened, she replied, with some embarrassment, that she was afraid it was a bad attack of "First Aid."

She had fallen while skating in company with other members of her advanced class in that science, and the diagnosis was dislocation, for which she was accordingly treated, but when she was finally restored to consciousness and a surgeon, the injury was found to be a break. It is so exactly the mistake in diagnosis that I should have made myself. I really think I had better practice what I am always preaching to my young friends — to learn by others' experience to avoid pitfalls. Besides, I always have the feeling that if one's own mother wit does not tell one what to do in an emergency, no first-aid or science-made-easy class could teach it. When one has served an apprenticeship to the unlimited variety of emergencies served up by one's own family, I fancy it is fairly safe to let it go at that. No — I don't think I'll join a "First Aid."

Among other queries on my little card is one as to whether I own a motor-car. It would seem a simple question, yet it is one that cannot be definitely answered without

the possibility of raising undue hopes. It reminds me irresistibly of the annual request of the Secretary of my Sewing Circle, who writes to me in August to know if I will hold the meeting at my house on the twenty-seventh of the following February. As it so happens, I do at present own a motor-car (when it is not in the repair shop), as well as a house on Beacon Street (when I am not turned out of it by an overflow of guests), but in event of war the probabilities are that I could not afford to have either, and should I now state that I possess these articles, I might later find myself placed awkwardly with the Government.

I hope the war will not affect everybody in this way, for motors will undoubtedly be an important adjunct to military operations. Already their value is being proved by the use made of the Motor Corps composed exclusively of young girls who are called upon to drive the military and naval officers from place to place in pursuance of their duties. Here again a little card comes into play. This must be signed, and

then with solemn ceremony the girls are sworn in to "place themselves at the disposal of the officers day and night." Of course I may be a little over-particular, but, well, — I think that contract might have been worded a bit differently.

Then, I have been requested to join a regiment of Female Militia! ! I have a feeling of breathlessness as I see that statement in black and white, but it gives me an immense amount of food for reflection. The dear cousin mentioned elsewhere in these pages came to see me yesterday, and reminded me gently but firmly of my inability to see more than one side of a question, so I must be careful to be entirely broad-minded in my consideration of this one. It seems to me that it should be considered with great gravity — if possible. It is to be a quite regulation regiment, with colonels and things all complete. I don't know whether their officers are to be appointed by West Point, or chosen by popular vote, but I must ascertain before I decide to enter the ranks. The age limit was not stated, but as

I never hide the light of my many grandchildren under any bushel baskets, the fact that I am not in my first youth must have been apparent to the enthusiastic acquaintance who urged my enlistment. I take it for granted therefore that one company will be formed exclusively of grandmothers. That's all right. Let no one dare cast any aspersions on the fighting abilities of my sex or generation. They are in perfectly good form; but the trouble is, I am afraid that I could not really put my mind into it because I should be so worried about what might be happening to my grandchildren while their mother had her head buried in the bowels of an automobile or her entire attention given to wig-wagging. Then, all my ideas as to clothes would have to be entirely *bouleversés*. I have just satisfied a craving of my Early-Victorian soul by the acquisition of a spinning-wheel, and have learned to spin, which, of course, necessitated the purchase of an appropriate costume, so the sweeping black silk dress, sheer neckkerchief, and priceless lace cap for which I

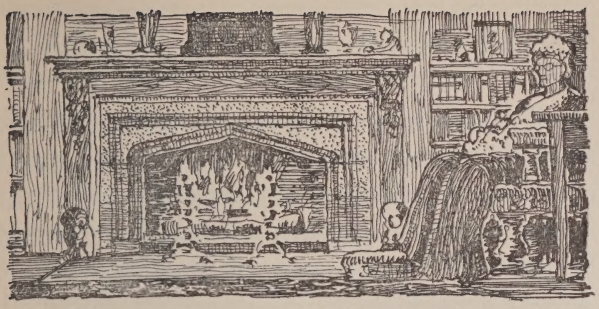
have long yearned, are hanging in my cupboard. I could n't possibly wear these on — what do they call them — tikes? — hikes? I am sure they would get soiled. I am a good deal exercised over the question as to how they are going to fit a uniform to the different styles of women, anyhow. Some of my co-grandmothers won't look a bit well with a sword-belt buckled around what used to be their waists, while there is also the question of suitable caps. For instance, I have n't any hair at all, and a forage cap could be placed quite firmly down over my ears without the least necessity for a hat-pin, while there is one friend of my daughter who has an immense quantity of enchanting curly locks upon which no cap could be persuaded to sit straight, and from beneath which such adorable little tendrils and love-locks would escape that no man enemy could possibly be hired to hurt her.

Dear me, — it is all very puzzling. I certainly think I must follow the example of President Wilson, and take "another night

for quiet reflection." But fortunately I am at best nothing but the humblest of privates in this great army of energy and loyalty, and it is not for me to exercise what I am pleased to call my mind over the plans of campaign, but only to fall into step, however halting or rheumatic my gait may be, that I may add my mite to swell the honour of a country of which, please God, some day we may not be ashamed.

REFLECTION VII

TOWN



VII

I HAVE just emerged in triumph from a hand-to-hand encounter with my conscience, and deposited it impotent, though chattering with rage, in the deepest recesses of my self-indulgence. I am due at the Surgical Dressings Committee, my Sewing Circle, two Board meetings, and a funeral (most of them at the same hour), which only increases my sense of immoral joy as I sink into the hospitable arms of my grandmother's chair (in my present frame of mind I feel no shame in unblushingly admitting it to be a rocking-chair), and place my cold toes on the fender preparatory to yielding myself up to abandoned reflection.

My parson would probably tell me that it would be much better for my soul if I spent the time in meditation upon my sins, but then, I reflect joyfully, my doctor friend says that I have n't any soul, and my parson is a pacifist, so, having no respect for the opinion of either of them, I shall do exactly as I please. A fraternal frankness born of inherited friendship would move the first-mentioned of these gentlemen to call me names for so wasting my time, but I have been called so many names in the course of my long and ill-spent life that I am hardened to it. Just at the moment it so happens that I am not on speaking terms with my husband because he called me a "mystic" the other day, and has n't yet had the grace to apologize for it. I don't know what he meant exactly, because I am not up in these modern terms, but it sounds as if it were first cousin or something to being "transcendental" — which 'ism a friend of my youth defined, in response to my anxious enquiry, as cleaning up the mess after one's sick puppy dog, and thinking

it was beautiful because you loved him. Then another dear friend and physician (not the one who grudges me my soul) has pronounced me "complex." Again, I am so ignorant that I don't know whether to feel insulted or gratified, but I have such affectionate respect for his opinion that I will accept the responsibility of being anything he says I am — except a suffragist or a pacifist; I must draw the line somewhere.

As I sit here in unmerited repose, I am thinking how I adore the winter and hate the cold, and how I love the summer and despise the country. Perhaps that is complexity. The feeling may not be incapable of analysis, but it is difficult to arrange one's life to fit its inconsistency. I am not much interested in complexity, even my own; there is plenty of it in the world without digging for it within ourselves; so I do not attempt to analyze anything, but, with the greatest simplicity, order my life by going out when it is warm and curling myself up by the fire when it is cold. It may perhaps

be slightly unfortunate that I am the mistress of a summer house that cannot be kept cool, and a winter one that it is impossible to heat; but even if the furnace never will send up anything but cold air in zero weather, there are always open fires, before which one may revolve like a turnspit, toasting the different portions of one's anatomy with impartiality; and, anyway, when one is in a nice, respectable town house replete with every comfort, one is quite willing to put up with a little chill occasionally.

I am so extremely old-fashioned that I sit in my bedroom a great deal, where the sun pours in all day, and I sniff with delight the fumes of my soft-coal fire, and pretend that I am living in London. Here, I am surrounded by the evidences of all my pet pastimes: my spinning-wheel in one corner and my type-writer in another (is this anachronism or complexity?); my gallery of beaux (quite safe — few of them are over thirty) on one wall, and my London motor license numbers on another. The family

accuse me of saying my prayers to these latter, but I do not in reality, though it may suit me to let them rest in that belief. The room is not really in a condition of finished perfection except when it is decorated with a crib across the foot of the bed wherein reposes one or other of the grandchildren on a visit. My husband says I make a dreadful fuss about the bother and nuisance of having a grandchild sleep with me; of course I do; that is half the fun of having it, just as half the satisfaction of summer is to look at the thermometer and remark: "Well, no wonder we feel hot," which attitude of mind applies to more of my friends and acquaintances than will admit it.

The library is a most charming room, even if my husband did design it. Of course that appears a questionable form of expression, but one has a certain delicacy about expressing enthusiasm over the abilities of one's husband because it seems such an inadmissible form of tooting one's own horn, and I find great difficulty in adequately

praising other people's possessions created by my husband and yet maintaining a decent show of modesty with regard to my pride in his achievements. I am so ignorant and stupid that I cannot invariably appreciate my husband's work, but this room is not above my powers. It is panelled in wood, and here live the portraits of our ancestors. It is very improper that it should be my grandfather and not that of the head of the family, who looks down benignantly upon his descendants from the place of honour in the room, but the head of the family did n't happen to have one and I did, — I mean the portrait, not the grandfather, — so precedence gave way to possession. He is not nearly so ornamental in a portrait as my husband's grandfather would have been; but he is an eminently respectable old party, and one imagines a slight expression of scandalized mistrust to pass across his features as he listens to some of the modern views expressed broadly beneath his aristocratic nose. Here is where my tea-table is set, with its pretty silver

released from the summer's durance vile, and responding warmly to the shaded lamp instead of blinking in the garish light of day. Here my particular friends kindly drop in to tell me how perfectly dreadful they think the new wings of the State House to be, or of the latest squabble amongst the members of the Fiction Committee at the Athenæum, complaining sadly that since the changes in the building they cannot find any of the books, and that they no longer feel at home within its once familiar precincts. I'm so glad my husband did not make the alterations in that abode of Boston learning; his reputation would never have survived the storm of criticism.

I have not many suffrage friends to visit me, but the few I have, I prize immensely. Their views obviate for me the necessity of cold showers or other shock-producing tonics, and restore to my hair the original curl that left it many years since. Two of them elected to hire a small cart one pleasant summer month, and with a third equally engaging but four-leggèd lady to

draw it, drove from one small town to another, delivering speeches to the unenlightened natives. I believe their venture was attended by a gratifying success — in the newspaper line. It is a matter of deep regret to me that there now exists a temporary coolness between one of these friends and myself. She is a most able lady, much given to admirable public speaking, and is noted in my family for the gentle, unmoved patience with which she bears my total lack of intelligence with regard to suffrage and politics. She is not only a suffragist but a Wilsonite, and when she used to come to call — she has not been lately — the family were nervous about it because there is a suspicion that I am not a supporter of that gentleman, and somehow or other they do not seem to trust my discretion of speech. Her name is not unlike my own, and though the mistake was inexcusable there appeared one day in the paper a notice to the effect that I — I — of all people on the face of this earth — would address a mass meeting on Boston Common, intro-

duced by Mayor Curley and endorsing President Wilson! Now that I am able to reflect upon it calmly, it arouses my sympathy to feel that she is undoubtedly just as much annoyed to have been confused with me and my ignorant views as I was to picture myself in the mental and physical position of addressing the Boston Public under the ægis of His Honour the Mayor; but I prefer not to dwell upon the subject.

Here too, once in every two years, my Sewing Circle meets, and where our husbands and our cooks were once the subject of discussion, "we girls" now compare notes as to our grandchildren and our sons-in-law. I resigned from my Sewing Circle once, but felt myself to be so indeed a peri out of Paradise that, chastened in mind and humbled in spirit, I applied for re-admission, and was received back again with greater hospitality than I deserved. I have always appreciated keenly the graciousness which not only elected me one of their number in the first place, but consented to receive back into the fold from which I had

strayed this sheep, not black, perhaps, but of a slightly different shade. I have not lived in Boston quite forty-two years yet, so I am still rather a newcomer, and I spend a great deal of my time in reflecting upon how fortunate I am. It is really the only place outside England in which any one of intelligence would be willing to live, and I am not unmindful of my privileges.

The little table at my elbow holds my books of the moment; my really old and tried friends live in the shelves by the fireplace, where Charlotte Mary Yonge leans confidingly against "Geoffrey Hamlyn," and Mrs. Molesworth and Sir Richard Burton regard each other somewhat askance. The Rollo books and the Franconia stories are not permitted to leave the room that was once the nursery. The two books on the little table at the moment are Ian Hay's "Getting Together," a delightful book, so full of appreciation that the most sensitive American could not but purr under his gentle touch, and some vividly clever "Portraits" by that most charming

of English *raconteurs*, who directs his American friends through the mazes of the House of Commons by pointing out "the door by my uncle's statue," and then gives way to unbridled mirth upon being accused of snobbery. For many months the latest war book or pamphlet was there, too, but one cannot read those very much now; the anguish has become too real and the horror has gone too deep. It is better to knit socks.

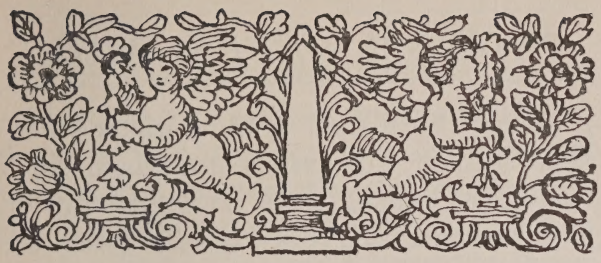
Opposite to my own particular corner is the big open fireplace, guarded by two nice little lions whom I enticed over with me from Venice, and who look a little disapprovingly at the Cape Cod lighter in convenient proximity. It is so pleasant to be able to talk about the library fire again with my husband, and to join in condemnation of the wet wood that refuses to burn. For a long time we had such different opinions with regard to the building of a fire that the coolness produced by the subject could not be warmed even when the fire could be persuaded to burn, but now we have decided that the library fire is his, and my bedroom

fire is mine, and neither of us may poke the other's fire, so the temperature is normal once more.

Yes, it is a pleasant house in which to grow old. Neither too large nor too small, too luxurious nor in any way bare; the happy mean between poverty and riches. It used to resound with the nonsense of young people once from morning till night, but now there are times when it is a little lonely, and I am glad there are no larger spaces to echo the emptiness. Not always, though. For the coming month our hospitality is claimed by a daughter, a son-in-law, two grandsons, a granddaughter, two nurses, and a nephew, —and the nephew would like me to invite his fiancée to join the party. No, it is not always lonely.

REFLECTION VIII

PASSING OF THE ATTIC



VIII

THE passing of the Attic — yes, but one must bewail not that only. It is n't just the Attic that is passing, but the whole era, with its ways, customs, manners, and morals, that is fading mistily into the past, leaving behind it a subject of mirth to the young and of tender memory to the old, but a vision of peaceful simplicity to both. Its requiem should be sung by a less unworthy pen than mine.

I don't suppose that the young people of to-day know exactly what an attic is; if they live on the Back Bay, their education does not extend even to so much as a cellar, and they doubtless have a vague idea that an attic was a sort of prehistoric portion of

a house where their grandmothers stored their trunks. You can't blame them, for if there does happen to be an extra story on a house nowadays, it is no longer called the attic or garret, but the trunk-room; and quite correctly, for there is nothing there *but* trunks, and empty ones at that. There is n't so much as the tail of their mother's wedding dress packed away there, let alone whole costumes of their grandmothers; there is n't a single hair trunk containing the faded yellow love-letters of their grandfathers, or the books and bonnets of fashions whose constitutions enabled them to live longer than six months. There is n't so much as the whisk of a tail of the mice who lived in happy little corners, and never will they see the beam of sunlight coming in through the dirty old window with the motes of dust dancing in weird confusion till they began to pose as ghosts. And not the least pathetic part of it is that these girls do not in the least know what they have missed, and think us doddering old idiots for pitying them.

It would be a work of supererogation to describe an old attic, with its joys and visions and the memories they evoke. Attics have been portrayed in paint and in words till even the second generation below us know them as they know other historical presentments of a bygone age, and to us who loved them no picture is necessary; each of us has our own private little picture in the gallery of our heart; but one may mourn their demise as one mourns so much of the Victorian era that is laughed at but loved.

There are lots of things I should miss if I had to jump back forty-five or fifty years, but if one had never had them, one would not miss them, and even *I* lived a good many years without much that I consider requisite to-day. I should hate to be obliged to wrestle with lamps and candles again, and I am quite sure that I could n't possibly live without my telephone, but I honestly would be quite willing to sacrifice the motor, and I could relinquish steam radiators and enamelled bathtubs without

a pang. How I long, even now, for my friendly old hat-tub. There is no poetry in a bath nowadays, and all the appropriate ritual of this daily duty is lacking. As I listen to the taps running viciously into that glazed receptacle of hygienic whiteness, I dream of the maid who used to come into the room with a beautiful great square of soft white blanket, placing it carefully on the appointed spot on the floor. Then she momentarily disappeared from view in her dive under the bed, from which she drew forth the nicely painted tin tub of pleasant blue with cool green on the outside, which crackled and banged with a cheery little song peculiarly its own. Placed just so, with its little soap-holder in a particular direction, she left you to a few moments of dreamy repose while you heard her drawing water noisily in the bathroom at the end of the hall, returning to pour it out of the big can with a generosity of volume to which no tap could ever attain. You had the whole width of the room to bathe in then — not a narrow little coffin, where

you bump your elbows in the endeavour to get at your back, or howl with anguish as you inadvertently knock some portion of your anatomy against the hot-water tap; and you stepped out of your tub with secure dignity, instead of slipping and sliding and grasping frantically at everything within reach. After many pathetic misfortunes, I now lie flat on my tummy on the edge, and cautiously hoist out one leg at a time, till I am sure that both feet are planted securely on that wiry atrocity on the floor labelled "TAM HTAB," and each day I heave a sigh of thankfulness that I have once more accomplished cleanliness without sudden death. But the hat-tub has vanished, enfolded in the grandmotherly arms of the attic.

As for steam radiators, they arouse every evil passion in me. They are the most hideous of all man's hideous inventions, and the frantic efforts to turn them into shelves or drape them with art embroideries is the last resort of overstrained artistic effort. They invariably occupy the one

wall-space available for something else, and the nasty little tin utensil sitting on top filled with water always upsets over one's best gown. One never knows which way to turn those evil-looking little wheels at the side; and though those who are up to date in modern conveniences may enjoy the bubble-burble-whizzle-sizz-bang-bang song, given forth at 4.30 or 5 A.M., I am not educated up to it.

Many excellent institutions have passed silently out of existence in the Attic's kindly embrace, and among them that much-maligned and misunderstood lady, Mrs. Grundy. Personally, I had a great respect for that useful if occasionally hysterical dame, and deeply mourn her demise. She had her uses in the world, and I have known a good many people who were kept in the paths of virtue through her influence, where a higher motive would have failed. She was a little severe with young people sometimes, I must admit. It really was rather hard on a perfectly respectable young woman of hitherto unblemished

character to have had it scattered to the four winds of heaven because she happened to be caught out overnight in the company of a quite irreproachable young man, through the unlucky accident of missing a train or being caught in the heavy drifts of a three-inch snowfall; but, on the other hand, I don't feel sure that the old lady did n't surreptitiously "lay her thumb unto her nose," knowing exactly what she was about. Of course no high-minded gentleman could possibly do other than propose to a girl whom he had so seriously compromised; and think of the many perfectly happy and satisfactory marriages that might never have come off had it not been for Mrs. Grundy's apparently cruel ministrations. It was she who demanded the presence of the chaperon, and I often wonder if the girl of to-day may not some time look back a little enviously upon her more sheltered sister of a generation ago, who could firmly and safely place her accompanying mother or aunt in a chair against the wall, secure in the conviction that she, and not they, would

do the dancing. It is the great-aunts and the grandmothers who monopolize all the really interesting men to-day, and the débutantes get the leavings. This has necessitated a readjustment of desirability on the part of youth, so they have decided to make the touchstone that of the excellence of saltatory powers. A girl may be as plain as a carrot or as insipid as pink lemonade, but if she dances well, her social success is assured. Similarly, a man may be a bounder or half-witted, but if his dancing exceeds in excellence that of the brightest or best-looking man in the room, there is n't a girl but will feel the ball a dismal failure if he has not danced with her at least once in the course of the evening.

I watched with a feeling of helpless incomprehension, at a ball not long ago, a young man, who, to my Early-Victorian eyes, seemed the epitome of all that was undesirable. He was undersized and sallow, he had pimples and damp hands, his conversation was irresistibly suggestive of the counter-jumper, and his wit of the descrip-

tion that enquires the difference between an elephant and a letter-box, and when his pretty little partner avowed her ignorance, replied with the brilliant repartee that in that case she could not be trusted to post a letter! Yet his little partner dimpled sweetly, and yielded him to another with an evident reluctance. Later interested enquiry on my part as to the reason of his charm elicited the information that he was the "most wonderful dancer in the world."

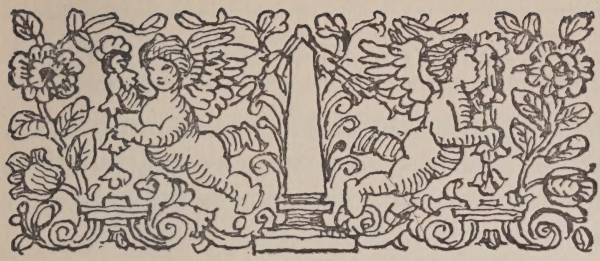
I have thought of Mrs. Grundy as having faded away together with the Attic, or of her disappearance in various unaccountable forms, but not until this moment has the conviction dawned upon me of what has really become of her. She has eloped with the Real Man, and together they are living in a well-ordered and decent Paradise of their own. The above adjectives are grossly inapplicable to the Paradises of to-day, and it is so long since I have seen a real man that I am homesick for him. The real man made also a real husband in those days, and there was no "unselfish generosity," or

"standing aside," to permit his wife a relationship with another man which she might consider necessary for the good of her soul, but which was painfully apt to be a pretty darned poor outlook for her morals. If a woman could n't get what her soul needed from her husband, she went without, and meantime the intrusive third was satisfactorily horsewhipped and forbidden the house. Or else they ran away together, and that was the end of *them*. How simple. Just imagine the face of a man of the 'fifties dining sociably with his divorced wife and her second (so-called) husband! Words would fail to paint his expression, and even Sargent would find it difficult to portray.

The contemplation seems to bring the subject to a fitting close, and the thoughts of the Early Victorian are best left unexpressed.

REFLECTION IX

LOOKING-GLASSES



IX

I AM acquiring such a habit of reflection that I feel like a looking-glass, but having accidentally come within the range of my own vision the other day it occurred to me that having done so much reflecting from Grandma's point of view, it might be extremely wholesome to step down a bit from the grand-parental shelf upon which one climbs so joyfully, and take a look at the situation from another point of view. For, just between me and myself (only I shan't tell the children so), I fancy it to be within the bounds of possibility that we Grannies are not as invariably in the right as we firmly believe ourselves to be. I make no undue admissions, but, to be painfully hon-

est, I think that perhaps once out of, say, ninety-seven times, any sympathy that may be floating about may possibly be due to the younger generation.

My daughter once remarked to me, with some asperity, that there was nothing quite so hateful as the air of "silent disapproval" that I assumed when she pursued some course with the babies that I did not like, to which I (not altogether calmly) retorted that there was nothing whatever "silent" about it. After a slightly electric pause, she 'lowed as how that was true, and the atmosphere cleared up.

It is really very difficult for a grandmother to adjust the attitude of her mind and the expression of her eyebrows to the entire satisfaction of everybody concerned. One has hardly had time to recover from the emotional gymnastics involved in removing one's self as far as possible from a life in which one has hitherto been preëminent to the position of looker-on, when one is required to undertake an entirely new series of exercises in the giving of a maximum of

sympathy with the minimum of criticism. I respectfully recognize a few elderly dames here and there who are agile enough to execute this gymnastic feat gracefully, but they are painfully few, and shine out with such brilliancy from amidst the rank and file of us that I am convinced they should hold special classes of "Preparedness" for the benefit of expectant grandmothers.

This case of the adjustment of mutual attitude is one where sympathy should be very carefully and fairly distributed to both parties. It is perfectly right and just that the young people should be full of excellent intentions and bursting with a sense of their own capability, and it is equally natural, anyway, for their elders and betters to be burning with altruistic desire to boost them over the difficulties which experience sees looming in their path. And who will deny that it requires distinct self-control on the part of the elders to sit firmly in their seats, and deliberately watch their offspring fall flat upon their silly little noses? Only

sometimes they don't, and that's where *we* feel flat.

I have a dark suspicion, too, that we do not always come forward with the alacrity we might to own ourselves as having been mistaken in our estimate of their abilities. This suggests a most painfully logical sequence of thought (I wish I was n't so disgustingly honest) that if they do not acknowledge their shortcomings and failings with the promptitude we might wish to see, just possibly it may be in some measure owing to the fact that the example set them has not been of an overwhelmingly brilliant clearness. And just here is where my excessive candour comes in, and compels me to remind myself that of course we used to do exactly the same thing.

When my father came to live with us for the last quarter of a century of his life, he brought with him a quantity of furniture from the old home, among which was a really beautiful carved mahogany sofa which was an heirloom. It did n't happen to fit any room of the house in which we

happened to be living at the time, so my husband and I sold it! For thirty dollars! It was probably worth one hundred and fifty! And to my brother-in-law, who has made thumb noses at us ever since, and refuses to sell it back, even at an advance! My husband and I never asked my father's permission, and my dear father never so much as lifted his eyebrows! Now, you know, if *my* daughter had done a thing like that, I should unquestionably have slapped her. But then, of course, I was not nearly so well brought up as my daughter was!

One day when a young mother of my acquaintance had been particularly exasperating in her criticism of the training of children by the past generation, I had it on the tip of my tongue to say that, judging from the results as evinced in herself, I was inclined to agree with her, but a mingled sense of justice and humour closed my lips.

Then, there is my dear mother-in-law. She is an even Earlier Victorian than I am, and when she comes to visit us, it is like having a tame saint about the house. No

one can understand more clearly than myself how often my husband and I have caused her soft white hair to rise under her pretty white cap, and yet, with a patience worthy of a better cause, she has borne sweetly and silently with all our vagaries; always there and always ready with quick sympathy and little advice; yet the best of listeners — an art much neglected to-day.

I have long been convinced that hers and my father's was a far finer generation than mine. And that, when you come to think of it, is a comforting conviction, because it gives one ground for the belief (we hopefully trust not entirely unfounded) that we are far finer than the generation below us. But somehow or other this Reflection does not refresh me with the same pleasant feeling of self-satisfied calm that I have experienced after the others. I wonder why?

REFLECTION X

NANDY

X

I WAS just twenty when I married, and it is not strictly untruthful to say that I had never so much as seen a baby. There were none in my family, for my brother was eight years older than I, my cousins older still, and my one intimate friend, three months my junior, was an only child. I never cared for dolls, and my friend, who lived directly across the street, so entirely filled the place, that I had no yearnings for a sister, so the occasional wish that we had a baby at our house arose more, I think, from the inherent instinct of a she child than from any real craving for it.

I was twenty and looked fifteen; my husband was twenty-one, and if one studied

him carefully he might, perhaps, have passed for seventeen; and this mature and experienced couple sailed merrily away to spend several years abroad in pursuit of a much-needed education.

We established ourselves in a charming little house, in the most charming part of London, and under the circumstances it was not surprising that when my first baby was expected, my knowledge of the subject was just about commensurate with that of my present youngest, unmarried, grandchild (*ætat* five weeks).

About two months before the date set for the arrival of the baby, our dear old white-haired landlord, who had taken a truly paternal interest in the infantile couple who had rented his house, said that the prospective nursery was not in good enough condition to receive the important personage who was to inhabit it, and that it must be painted; whereupon the doctor said that the smell of paint was not advisable under the circumstances, and promptly ordered us away for a fortnight.

After some deliberation we decided upon Canterbury as being easy of reach, pleasant, and provided with a cathedral where my husband could pursue his studies in architecture. Not finding the inn all that we could desire, we cast about for lodgings, and found humble but pleasant rooms in a funny little lane close to a small church and opposite a great open space filled with trees where the rooks gathered by the thousand. That was thirty-one years ago, and to this day the cawing of those talkative black fowl brings back with intense vividness the quaint little lane and the perfume of that most springlike of all spring flowers, the English primrose, with which the open space was carpeted and with which our rooms were kept full. We walked and we talked, and my husband sketched and measured, and well I remember one glorious morning which I spent reclining luxuriously in a wheelbarrow in the shade of the cathedral, sewing baby clothes while my husband sketched Bell Harry tower.

The next morning I did not feel very well

and we sent for the doctor. Such a doctor! I shall never see his like again. Over seventy, but still erect and straight in his height of over six feet; perfectly white hair, a Roman and most aristocratic nose, keen, kindly blue eyes, the whitest of white shirts with the most beautifully "goffred" wide white ruffle down the front, and his monocle hung by a slender gold chain around his neck. He asked me when I expected my baby, and I told him in May, to which he replied, "Ah, me deah child, it will be much sooner than that"; and sure enough, about three hours later there came into the world the tiniest, feeblest, most fragile little soul that ever breathed. He was too tiny to be dressed; he could only be rolled up in cotton wool, and put into an old soap-box which was tucked inside the fender close to the little coal fire. But he lived and throve. When he was eight weeks old, and I, by that time being learned in babies, considered him a splendid, big, normal child, we weighed him, and he just barely tipped the scales at three pounds.

My own personal maid, an old family servant, was his nurse for some time, but when he was about six months old, we were obliged to make a change, and on looking through the advertisements in the London *Times*, there was one which for some reason appealed to me above all others. It was signed "A.F.," and for "A.F." I sent, and she came to be interviewed. Such a nice-looking woman. About thirty, of comfortable proportions, with a sweet, soft voice that scattered aitches to the winds; a fresh red and white skin, and very pretty brown hair with a broad streak of a much lighter shade right through the middle of it. That was the end of any troubles or cares, and the beginning of the really "splendid, big, normal" child who eventually grew into six-foot manhood. Her wages were ten shillings ($2.50) a week, which we soon generously (!) increased to twelve, and she had no afternoons out or evenings off, and only ran out to church on Sundays when the baby was asleep or it was "quite convenient."

That summer we spent in Wales, where the baby began to invent a language of his own. The nurse was always spoken of to him as "Nanna," and after a few tentative "Nans" he broke triumphantly out into "Nandy," and "Nandy" she became, not only to the baby and the family, but to the world at large, even receiving letters addressed to "Miss Nandy F." How she adored that baby, and how he lived and moved and breathed in her! Day and night, early and late, awake or asleep, such devotion was unrivalled, and he grew round and fat and jolly.

He was not a baby who cared for toys, much preferring an old stick or stone, or a few empty spools strung together, but that summer one of his godfathers came to pay us a visit bringing, as an offering to his godson, the most hideous brown cloth monkey that ever was seen. One was almost afraid to show it to the child for fear it should frighten him out of his wits, yet for some unknown reason he clasped it to his heart as a man and a brother, and for many a long

year he was never separated from "Nupta" day or night.

The following winter was spent in Italy and France. No matter what the irregularities or situations the baby was kept perfectly good, happy, and serene; no matter at what time the train started, baby and Nandy were always ready. On one long run from Paris to Turin some mistake had been made with regard to accommodations, and we found ourselves with only the ordinary day carriage for the night. The baby (and Nupta) went as contentedly to sleep on the hard seat as if they had been in their own little crib, while Nandy spent a blissful night on the carriage floor with a valise for a pillow, and one hand on the baby lest he should roll off.

By the time we returned to spend the month of May in Paris he had grown to be a child of such beauty as to excite remark, and to Nandy's intense pride she was often stopped and spoken to about him; once on the stairs of the hotel it was by Liszt, who stopped and played with the child and

left him with a kiss — which was perhaps the birth of the musical talent and beautiful voice which the boy later developed.

When we returned to the States, Nandy came with us, and for nearly eight years she lived no life but in that of her boy. She was his horse, his cow, his soldier, his devoted slave, yet, with all, there was no spoiling. There were no tears, no fights, no rebellions, yet from the time she taught him that he must not cry for his bottle — that it was "all gone — more to-morrow" — he was trained in obedience, truthfulness, good manners, and morals; and he was so happy in his upstairs, nursery life that when at ten years old he was told that he might dine downstairs when we were alone, he replied that he did n't want to — that he had much rather have tea in the nursery and have Nandy read to him. And she would read by the hour.

When he was nearly eight a little sister was born who was given into Nandy's care when she was about six weeks old. Nandy was a baby-lover, and rejoiced to get another

baby into her arms; she was as devoted and faithful and loving as before, yet there was never quite the same adoration as for "her boy," though it was an added joy to her to have a real nursery established again. Here Nandy was queen in her own domain, and lucky were the members of the family and our friends when Nandy invited us to nursery tea; when she made the most delicious buttered toast for us over the open coal fire, where the kettle bubbled Dickens-ishly on the hook, and she served us tea out of her own little brown English teapot sitting on the hob. She always said that tea made in anything else was n't so good — "hit 'ad n't the same taste like."

On these tea-party occasions, as on all others, Nupta, the old brown monkey, was much to the fore. By this time he had, of course, descended to the baby sister, who, having an actual and lively objection to dolls, was, as her brother had been, inseparable from this extraordinary object. For twenty-nine years Nupta was invariably found keeping guard among the children's

Christmas presents, usually dressed in a new suit of clothes made secretly by Nandy after the children were in bed and asleep; the last one being a full suit of men's clothes, with striped trousers, morning coat, shirt, and tie all complete. One year he appeared with a wife, and the next with a baby, but neither Mrs. Nupta nor the baby lived very long, nor succeeded in winning their way into the family affections.

The years went by and Nandy's children grew up. Her boy went to boarding-school, and then to college, and the baby grew up till Nandy turned from nurse into maid and had more time on her hands than she liked. She had become very much interested in a certain religious sect, and one autumn when her last baby was about eighteen she came to me and said that the children no longer needed her, and that she thought she would like to go away and live with a friend and work among these people, but that she should be right here in the same city with us, and she would see us very often. She did. This was in November, and if either of

the children (then eighteen and twenty-five) had a cold or was ailing, Nandy came and took care of them; if we wanted extra help, Nandy came and gave it; if we could n't find something we wanted, from a diamond necklace to a tooth-brush, Nandy came and found it for us. The spring came and the question arose as to who had best be left in the town house to take care of the old black cat and my husband (this precedence is intentional) while we were at our summer place, and it occurred to me that Nandy was just the person. And she was. She gave my husband his breakfast the few nights he spent in town, and for the rest of the time she was quite content with her religious work outside and the companionship of the old black cat, Anonymous, in the house.

When I returned in the autumn, I had been very ill, and was just dismissing my trained nurse, and, knowing that I should feel very lost without her at first, I suggested to Nandy that if she had not engaged her room or if her religious work was not pressing, I should so much like to have her

stay on just one week and take care of me until I felt a little more independent. The week passed, and nothing was said about her leaving; a month passed, six months, a year, and no word was said by either of us, and still Nandy was here. That was the end of her "children not needing" her or her "work outside."

In due time her second baby grew up and married, and went away to her own home. By this time her boy was nearly thirty years old, but she still scolded and took care of him, still insisted on doing all his mending, and would run her old legs off if he wanted anything, and when he had one of the excruciating headaches to which he had always been subject, he would let no one but Nandy come near him.

One summer he had spent several months in the Labrador, both because he had been there several times before and was interested in the work, and also with the hope of shaking off these violent headaches which were telling on his health. Nandy was a happy woman when her great, handsome,

six-foot boy put his arms around her neck on his return, and kissed her on both cheeks, and she grumbled happily to him that she hoped he would stay at home now, and not go any more to that "houtlandish place." She was happier still for the next two or three days, getting him unpacked and washed up and mended up, and the busier he kept her the better she liked it.

One morning, about five days after his return, he had spent an hour or two playing and singing at the piano, and came running upstairs two steps at a time, shouting to Nandy to get his bath ready for him, as he was going out to lunch. She was just going down to her dinner, but she stopped and did it — of course. She would have gone without her dinner altogether, and stayed and dressed him if she could, but when she had done all that was possible she left him and went down. About half an hour later she came up again, and was busied in another room for a while, till she suddenly said to herself: "There, now, it's so quiet in there — I'll be bound that boy has thrown

himself down on his bed and gone to sleep, and he'll be late for his lunch — I'll go and wake him." He had, indeed, thrown himself on his bed and gone to sleep, but it was the Sleep from which even the voice of his dear old Nandy could not wake him, nor the cry of "My boy, my boy!" which came from a breaking heart.

From that moment the light went out of her life, but the one thought that consoled and held her steady was the need of her other baby, who was expecting in a short two or three weeks a baby of her own. To her Nandy went, covering up her own broken heart, and easing her own pain by watchful love and care lest the shock should harm this child, who came second only to her boy. In due course of time the Baby's baby came, safely, and Nandy welcomed it with love and a rapidly growing affection, though the mainspring of her life seemed gone, and she did not feel that this baby was quite so much her own.

At the end of another year and a half a little brother was to arrive, and the Baby's

baby was sent for two or three months to be in the entire care of Grannie and Nandy, and for the first time since her boy left her, Nandy was overflowing with happiness. It seemed as if some of the joy of her first baby had returned to her, and she poured out such a wealth of love and devotion on this "grand-baby" as she had not shown since the earliest days of her boy. Once more old Nupta was brought out from his honourable retirement, and to our great amusement the grand-baby welcomed him with the same ardour of affection as had her mother and uncle. Old songs almost forgotten were sung, and it was as if the old nursery days had come back to Nandy again.

One night she had just put the baby to bed and to sleep, picked up the toys and finished all her work, when I heard her voice calling me to come to her quickly. I found her at the door of her boy's room, and there, on his bed, on the very spot where a year and a half ago she had found him in his last sleep, in a few short moments she too fell quietly and peacefully asleep, and followed her boy.

And now she lies at his feet, close to him, as she lay so many nights of his babyhood and youth, waiting till the last long night is past and they both wake together to the Light of the Perfect Day.

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INTO the life of every grandmother come the inevitable hours, alike dreaded and desired, of quiet loneliness, when one is free to sit in the chimney corner, and the knitting comes to a pause as we find ourselves alone with the thoughts and memories that are for the moment our sole companions. They are of many colours, grave and gay, sad and happy, but all are veiled by the kindly twilight, and the rebellious tears or merry laughter of the years past, become the sigh or smile of one aloof. For the attitude of a grandmother must of necessity be one of detachment. We must, indeed, be "always there and always ready," but equally must we be ready to

stand aside, dependent on none for our meed of content. Our joys — yes, and our sorrows as well — must be largely vicarious, for we are learning to love down to a lower generation instead of up, as was once our right. Our homes must be homes to others till the very end, but there are few "Grannies" whose eyes have not been opened "to see that earthly homes may not endure nor fill the heart," and each day lived brings to us in the twilight the surer conviction that our hearts are with those who live in the Light of the Perfect Day.

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